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April 22, 2014

VIA EMAIL AND USPS MAIL

Dr. Phyllis Wise
Chancellor
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Swanlund Administration Building
601 E. John Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Dear Chancellor Wise:

Dr. James Kilgore, a visiting lecturer in the Global Studies Program, and a part-time member of the academic staff at the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, has sought the advice and assistance of the American Association of University Professors as a result of an April 9, 2014, meeting with Provost Ilesanmi Adesida at which he was told that his contract would not be renewed for the 2014-2015 academic year in either capacity, with no explanation of the basis for the decision against further appointment.

The Association's interest in Dr. Kilgore's case stems as you know from our long-standing commitment to academic freedom and tenure, as articulated in the attached joint 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* and endorsed by more than 220 educational and scholarly organizations. Derivative standards relating to the service of part-time faculty members are set forth in Regulation 13 of the AAUP's *Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure*. We also call your attention to our 2011 report, *Ensuring Academic Freedom in Politically Controversial Academic Personnel Decisions* (also attached). We have reviewed the applicable University of Illinois *Statutes*.

According to the information provided to us by Dr. Kilgore, he began serving as a part-time, non-tenure-track lecturer in December 2012, and as a part-time grant writer in 2010. Following his April 9 meeting with the provost, he received an April 18 letter from Professor Thomas J. Bassett, director of global studies, informing him that the Global Studies Faculty Advisory Committee had approved Dr. Kilgore's proposal to teach four courses during the 2014-2015 academic year, but that those courses had not been approved at the college or campus levels. Professor Bassett's letter further stated,

When I sought clarification as to why the courses were not approved, I received no explanation. It is disappointing for me to convey this news, especially in the absence of a rationale for the decision. We appreciate your past teaching service to LAS Global Studies and wish that we could employ you again. Not all of our faculty make the List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by their Students!"

We understand that Dr. Kilgore, who has a felony conviction for which he served six and half years in prison, and which he disclosed at the time of his application for employment by the university, received excellent performance evaluations from his supervisors and his students. On February 9, 2014, a local newspaper published a lengthy article detailing his criminal background and his political activities in the 1970s, and his appointment at UIUC, followed by similar accounts on February 16 and February 23. In a March 22 Chicago *Sun-Times* article the university responded with a supportive statement from Associate Provost Robin Kaler,

He does a great job. He's very well-respected among students. He served his time in prison. He is very remorseful. He didn't do the shooting. He is a good example of someone who has been rehabilitated, if you believe in second chances and redemption, he's someone who helps prove that's the human thing to do. A child of the victim said he has served his time and should be allowed to go on with his life.

Just two weeks later, Provost Adesida told Dr. Kilgore that he would not be receiving a new contract. In an April 18 email to the provost, Dr. Kilgore again requested the reasons for the decision.

We are troubled by the above sequence of events. Regulation 13 of our Association's *Recommended Institutional Regulations* provides that a contingent faculty member like Dr. Kilgore should be afforded a written statement of reasons for nonreappointment and access to an appropriate grievance process for review of a claim that the adverse decision was based on inadequate or impermissible considerations. We also question whether media reports highlighting Dr. Kilgore's felony conviction and political activities may have provoked an improperly political response to an academic decision. According to the Principles to Guide Decision Making regarding Politically Controversial Academic Personnel Decisions as set forth in our report *Ensuring Academic Freedom*, "all academic personnel decisions, including new appointments and renewals of appointments, should rest on considerations that demonstrably pertain to the effective performance of the academic's professional responsibilities."

We would welcome your comments. Assuming the accuracy of the sequence of events recounted above, we recommend that Dr. Kilgore be retained to teach the four courses approved by the Global Studies Faculty Advisory Committee, and that any subsequent action be consistent with the attached principles and standards.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Anita Levy, Ph.D.
Associate Secretary

Attachments by Email

Chancellor Wise

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cc: President Robert Easter
Provost Ilesanmi Adesida
Executive Vice Provost Barbara Wilson
Interim Associate Provost Brian Endres
Associate Provost Robin Kaler
Dean Mary Kalantzis
Dean Edward Feser
Professor Thomas J. Bassett
Dr. James Kilgore